

Tom Horne
Superintendent

N.E.W.S

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For More Information please contact Amy Rezzonico, Press Secretary (602) 542-5072

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, December 23, 2005

ARIZONA SCHOOLS CHIEF ANNOUNCES CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTING BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ASU AND ADE HOST JANUARY 11-12, 2006

PHOENIX (Friday, December 23, 2005) --The Arizona Department of Education, in conjunction with Arizona State University, will host *Determined to Succeed: Stories of School Improvement*. The January 11th and 12th conference at ASU will introduce benchmarking as a school improvement tool and is open to all K-8 educators. Benchmarking is the process of matching schools with the highest performing peers of similar characteristics in order to identify and replicate effective practices.

"School improvement teams frequently ask us to match them with higher performing schools that have similar demographic characteristics," said Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne. "They want to know what the higher performing schools are doing so they can replicate those effective practices to their schools. Benchmarking is an improvement discipline that will provide us the framework to do just that."

The conference is designed to answer these requests. Some 20 best-in-class schools will present the programs, strategies, and practices that contribute to their success, and offer insights to lower performing schools with similar characteristics. These 20 schools represent diverse urban, suburban, and rural demographics with wide ranges of poverty, English language learner populations and mobility.

The 20 best-in-class schools were identified in a comprehensive benchmarking study by Prism Decision Systems, LLC with assistance from Arizona State University. The benchmarking study analyzed three years of AIMS assessment results for 792 Arizona schools reporting grade 3 and grade 8 AIMS results. The analysis determined how well schools produce AIMS results for their levels of poverty, English language learners and mobility. Those schools that had the highest performance for their levels of poverty, English language learners and mobility were considered the best-in-class or benchmark schools.

"We are always looking to Arizona educators for answers to Arizona's challenges in education. The benchmark schools will highlight strategies that worked to increase student achievement on their campus, and they will share their own stories of School Improvement with those attending the conference," said Tom Horne. "We are thrilled to identify some very special schools who have worked diligently to increase student achievement and to maintain high

expectations for all of their students to succeed. It will be great to have them share their stories of school improvement with others throughout the state.”

For more information on the Determined to Succeed conference, visit the Arizona Department of Education website at: <http://www.ade.az.gov/onlineregistration/EventLocationSelection.asp?EventID=938>

###